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"Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, a Godhead."

— Sri Aurobindo

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Beauty is as much
An Expression
of
The Divine
As Knowledge, Power or Ananda.

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The Advent

The past acts count so long as the man does not change.

SRI AUROBINDO

The ADVENT

AUGUST, 1959

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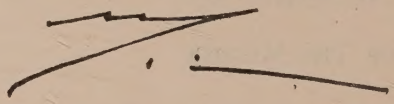
True humility consists in knowing that the Supreme Consciousness, the Supreme Will alone exists and that I *is not*.



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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

THE MOTHER'S COMMENTARY ON SRI AUROBINDO'S *Thoughts and Aphorisms*

III

"When I speak, the reason says, "This will I say"; but God takes the word out of my mouth and the lips say something else at which reason trembles".

WHEN Sri Aurobindo says "I", he speaks of himself and of his own experience. We would like very much to say that it is symbolic and that it might be applicable to many persons, but unfortunately it is nothing of the kind.

The experience, when one speaks, of not saying the thing that one wanted to say but something else is quite frequent, but that is

* Mother's Weekly Talks to the Children of the Ashram

the reverse. That is to say, when you are quietly seated within yourself, with the maximum of reason at your disposal, you decide whether you are going to say this or that, and it is reasonable; but very often when you begin to speak, it is the impulses from below, unreasonable emotions and vital reactions that get hold of the tongue and make you say things which one should not say.

Here it is the same phenomenon, but, as I said, the other way round. Instead of infra-rational impulses making you speak out of excitement and passion, it is, on the contrary, an inspiration coming from above, a light and a knowledge greater than that of reason which seize the speech and make you say things which one could not have said even with the most enlightened reason.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that "reason trembles"; because these higher truths appear always in the human domain as paradoxes, as revelations contradictory to reason; not that reason is incapable of understanding what comes from higher regions, but these revelations are always in advance, far in advance of what reason has understood and admitted. What human reason today finds reasonable, was paradoxical and foolish in the past; and probably, one can say even surely, these unexpected, paradoxical, revolutionary revelations that are being expressed now and at which reason trembles, will one day in the future be a knowledge very reasonable and will themselves tremble at new revelations.

It is this feeling of something always moving, always progressing always transforming itself that Sri Aurobindo tries to give us in these brief sentences that make our understanding of things waver for a moment, so that we may hasten forward and get a sense of the complete relativity of all that finds expression in the world, and make us feel that this universe is ever on the march towards a higher and greater Truth.

For us now the supramental transformation is the expression of the highest truth, that is the Revolution that we have to accomplish upon earth. And certainly as the majority of human beings must have the feeling of absoluteness in the Revolution,

otherwise they would not be able to do the thing. Sri Aurobindo insists, however, that we should not forget that this absolute is yet a relative and that the manifestation will be relative in respect of an Absolute still more absolute which is a Non-manifest that will manifest hereafter.

IV

> "I am not a Jnani, for I have no knowledge except what God gives me for His work. How am I to know whether what I see be reason or folly ? Nay, it is neither; for the thing seen is simply true and neither folly nor reason."

I am not a Jnani. . . . Jnani is one who follows the path of Knowledge, one who wishes to achieve the Yoga exclusively by Knowledge and who starts on a purely intellectual path with a will to pass beyond and attain the Knowledge that is no longer intellectual but spiritual. And Sri Aurobindo says, "I am not a Jnani. . . . I do not seek knowledge, I have given myself to the Divine for Him to do His work, and, through the Divine Grace, at every moment I know what I must know to do the work".

It is an admirable condition, it is the perfect peace of the spirit. There is no more need to accumulate a mass of acquired knowledge, things learnt which one has to remember; no more need to load the brain with thousands and thousands of things in order to have at one's disposal at the required moment the knowledge necessary for an action to do, for a teaching to give, for a problem to solve. The head is silent, the brain still, all is blank, quiet, peaceful, and at the moment when it is needed, by the fact of the Divine Grace, a drop of light falls into the consciousness and what is to be known is known. What cares should one have to remember, why should one try to keep this knowledge ? The day or the moment when it is necessary to have it, one will always have it. At every moment you are like a blank page on

which the thing that is to be known is written down—in the peace, repose and silence of a perfect receptivity.

You know what you must know, you see what is to be seen and as what is to be known and seen comes straight from the Supreme, it is the very Truth itself and that completely escapes the notions of reason or folly. What is true is true—that is all. You have to come down a good deal in order to ask whether it is foolish or reasonable.

A silence and a modest, humble, attentive receptivity. No anxiety to show oneself or even to be—quite simply the instrument by itself is nothing, knows nothing, but it is ready to receive and to transmit everything.

The first condition is self-forgetfulness, total self-giving, absence of ego.

And the body says to the Supreme Lord, "What you want me to be, I shall be, what you want me to know I shall know, what you want me to do, I shall do."

V

> "If mankind only caught a glimpse of what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained these treasures. But the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, distrust and scepticism are there, sentinels of Nature to forbid the turning away of our feet from ordinary pastures."

The phrase "caught a glimpse" used by Sri Aurobindo means "to have a total view, but for a short while". Evidently, a constant vision of all these things would automatically oblige you to take the path. Certainly also, to have a fragmentary glimpse is not sufficient, it is not a weight strong enough to compel you to follow the way.

But if you have a total vision, however brief, you cannot resist the temptation to make the necessary effort for realisation; but in fact a total vision is rare. That is why Sri Aurobindo says, "If mankind only..."

Truly speaking, they who are ready, who are undoubtedly destined for the realisation, very rarely fail to have, at a certain moment of their lives, even if it be only for a few seconds, the experience of what this realisation is.

But even they, even those whose destiny is sure and certain, have to struggle terribly, obstinately against something which one seems to take in with the air that one breathes : the apprehension, the fear of what might come to pass. It is so stupid, for in the last analysis, the destiny of everyone is the same : to be born, to live—more or less well—and then to die; and again to wait for sometime more or less, to begin once more to be born, to live—more or less well—and to die again, and so on indefinitely until one becomes ready to have had enough of the thing.

Fear of what ? Fear of getting out of the rut ? fear of being free ? fear of not being a prisoner any more ?

And then if you have courage enough to overcome that, you tell yourself "come what may !"; but you distrust yourself, you ask yourself if it is reasonable, if it is true, if all that is not pure illusion, if you are not giddy, if all that truly corresponds to anything. And mark, this distrust seems idiotic and yet it is found even in the most intelligent, even in those who have had repeated and conclusive experiences—I say, it is something that one absorbs with the food that one takes, with the air that one breathes, with the contact of others.

And even when you have overcome these two obstacles, when the experiences are so strong that no doubt can exist, it is a thing impossible—it is as if one doubted one's own life—then remains this thing that is frightful, petty, dry, acid, namely, scepticism. And that is based on human pride, that is why it lasts so long. One would like to believe oneself above these things, saying, "Oh ! as for myself I do not fall into these traps ! I am a

reasonable man, I see things from the practical point of view, I cannot be duped". It is nasty ! it is sordid ! But it is dangerous.

Even at the moments of great enthusiasm, even when one is full of an exceptional, marvellous experience, that thing rises from below, ugly, sticky, repulsive. And yet it rises up and spoils everything.

To conquer that you must be a stupendous warrior, you have to fight with all the obscurities of Nature, with all her malignities and her temptations.

Why does she do that ? It is as if she was going against her own aim. But I have already explained the thing to you many times. Nature knows very well what she is moving towards, what is the goal; she wants it, but...in her own way. She does not find that she is losing time. She has eternity before her. She wants to follow her path as she likes, with as much meandering as it pleases her, turning backward, moving away from the straight path, beginning again and again the same thing to see what might happen. And then those illumined hot heads who want to reach the goal immediately, as soon as possible, who are thirsty for the truth, the light, the beauty and poise...such people are a bore to her, they press her on, they say she is losing time. Her time ! She always answers, "But I have eternity before me, should I be in haste, but why are you in haste ?" and with a smile she tells them again, "your haste is just in the measure of the human being you are; widen yourself, become infinite, be eternal and you will never be in haste".

There is such amusement for her on the way, but it does not amuse everybody.

That is what happens when one sees things from a great height, from very far, when one sees things that are vast, almost infinite; all that troubles the human being, makes him suffer, disappears. And then those who are very wise and have abandoned life for a very high wisdom tell you with a smile, "Why do you suffer ? Come out of that, you will suffer no more !" It is all right individually, but after all when one thinks of others, one might

wish this comedy, somewhat tragic, to come sooner to an end. And it is quite legitimate if one feels tired of living like an animal in the pasture, tired of moving from one blade of grass to another blade of grass, tired of ruminating in one corner what one has absorbed, tired of having very limited horizons and missing all the splendours of life.

Perhaps it amuses Nature that we are like that, but as for us, we have had enough of it; we want to be something else.

That is it; it is when one has had enough of such things, when one wants to be something else that one comes to have the courage, the force, the possibility of conquering these three great enemies —fear and doubt and scepticism. But I repeat, it is not sufficient to sit down one fine day, look at oneself as one is and fight that in oneself once for all; one must do it, do it over and over again and continue almost as it were endlessly if one is to be sure of having got rid of the thing. In reality, one is perhaps never truly free, but a time comes when one is so different within oneself that one is no longer touched by those things. One may see them, but one sees them with a smile. And a simple gesture makes them go away, they return from where they came, perhaps a little changed, perhaps less strong, less obstinate, less aggressive until the time when the Light becomes strong enough for all obscurity to disappear.

As for the wonders of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, it is better not to describe them, because each one feels them, perceives them, experiences them in his own way—and for each one it is the best. You must not adopt another's way, you must have your own, then the experience has its full value, its inestimable price.

To conclude, I wish you all to have these experiences. For that, you must have faith, trust, a good deal of humility, and much good will.

Open yourself, aspire and wait. It will come surely. The Grace is there, she asks nothing more than to be able to work for all.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(*After Pranam I feel a kind of uneasiness at times.*)

An uneasiness of that kind is always due to a resistance somewhere—something that remains closed and does not open when it is touched by the Force. It is due probably not so much to yourself as to other conflicting influences that are acting upon you.

10-1-1933

***

(*While listening to a song on Shiva I closed my eyes. I then saw two or three snakes. What do they signify?*)

It was the snakes of Shiva. They were probably evoked by the music. Mother also saw them with their heads up and dancing.

19-3-1933

***

(*It is said that the soul sits in the heart and it is as big as a thumb. What does the thumb mean?*)

It is the psychic being that is meant. The heart here is not the physical heart—but the psychic centre, which is called the heart-lotus.

Nothing is meant by the thumb. It is simply that the yogins used to see the psychic being in a very small image no larger than a man's thumb.

22-3-1933

*
**

(*I looked at your photograph in the Reception Room after meditation and clearly saw the portrait move its shoulders and as if breathing.*)

There was a movement in the vital plane and you opened to an inner vision of it.

22-3-1933

*
**

It is Prakriti (Nature) that sends these impulses. Nature sends all kinds of forces and experiences to each. It is for you as a conscious being (Purusha) to choose whether you shall do or not do; you should reject what you see to be wrong, accept only what is true and right. In Nature there is the higher and the lower, the true and the false. What the Divine wants of you is that you should grow in the Truth and the higher Nature, reject the false and the lower Nature.

6-4-1933

*
**

(*What is the difference between the Supreme and the Divine?*)

The Divine is everywhere on all the planes of consciousness seen by us in different ways and aspects of His being. But there

is a Supreme which is above all these planes and ways and aspects and from which they come.

*
**

It is the ego in the vital that makes all sorts of demands and has all sorts of expectations and gets sad and angry and revolted if it does not get all it wants or all it thinks it should have or if other people get and it does not.

You should reject all these things as foolish and selfish and to tell the vital ego that Mother knows best and does for the best in each one and you must not make a row like this for nothing.

*
**

(*What is the way to guard oneself from the vital ego?*)

Devotion to the Mother; not thinking too much about yourself; taking everything calmly as part of the experience of life necessary for reaching the Divine.

*
**

(*When I heard the Mother reading out "Les prières et les méditations" my body was thrilled. How?*)

When an intense Power is put out, it will naturally give a thrill to those who receive it.

*
**

(*Is one to aspire to live for eternity?*)

The ideal would be not to be subject to Death, but to change the body whenever it is necessary with full consciousness.

*
**

(*Ostrich in a vision.*)

The Ostrich may mean rapidity of movement.

*
**

When a habit of these moods (depression or revolt) has been formed, they cannot be got rid of at once. There are three ways of doing it : (1) to strengthen your own will, so that nothing can come or stay as it likes but only as you like ; (2) to think of something else, plunge the mind in some healthy activity ; (3) to turn to the Mother and call in her force. One can do any of these or all, but even in doing these it will take a little time to get rid of the habit.

*
**

Remain firm and turned in the one direction—towards the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE true painting aims at creating something more beautiful than the ordinary reality.

3-4-1932

*
**

When you have a desire you are governed by the thing you desire, it takes possession of your mind and your life, and you become a slave. If you have greed for food you are no more the master of food, it is the food that masters you.

27-8-1932

A GREAT GOD HAS BEEN RELEASED

(*Contd. from last issue*)

Yadīm gaṇasya raśanām ajīgaḥ śucir ankte śucibhir gobhir agniḥ ād dakśinā yujyate vājayanti uttānām ūrdhvo adhayat juhūbhiḥ. (3)

WHEN so he has put forth the tongue of enjoyment of his host, *yadīm gaṇasya raśanām ajīgaḥ*, Agni has put forth his powers for an uplifted and perfect activity, *ruṣad adarśi pājo*,—for redness is always the symbolic colour of action and enjoyment. This *pājas*, Agni's force or massed army, is again described in the *gaṇasya raśanām*, but while the idea in the second verse is that of their indistinctive mass, here the *gaṇaḥ* or host of Agni's powers, the devatas of his nature who apply themselves to his particular works, are represented as brought out in their individuality collected in a mass,—for this is always the fire of *gaṇaḥ*—each with his tongue of flame licking the mid air, (*surabhā u loke—madhye iddhaḥ* in Verse 6), enjoying that is to say the vital energies and vital pleasure (*aśva* and *ghṛtam*), which support this higher action. Supported by this vital joy and force Agni acts, *ankte agnir*; but the enjoyment is not impure and unilluminated enjoyment of the unuplifted creature,—he is *śuciḥ*, purely bright, not smoky with unpurified Pranic impulses, and his flames of action are in their nature pure flames of illumination, *śucibhir gobhir*. In modern diction, when the divine force has so far purified us, our activities and enjoyments are not darkened and troubled with striving and clouded vital desires which strain dimly towards a goal, but, not being *ṛtaja*, know not what they should seek, how they should seek it, in what force and by what methods and stages, our action becomes a pure illumination, our enjoyment a pure illumination; by the divine illuminations, as their motive force, essence and instrument, our actions and enjoyments are effected. We see just the curious and delicate literary art of the Vedic

style in its symbolism, by this selection of the great word, *go*, in this context, in preference to any other, to describe the flames of Agni. In the next line, with an equally just delicacy of selection *juhu* is used for the same flames instead of *bhānu* or *go*.

It is in this state of pure activity and enjoyment that the characteristic uplifting action of Agni is exercised, for then, *ad*, the discriminative intellect, *dakṣinā*, growing in the substance of its content and havings, *vājayantī*, is yoked or applied to its work under these new conditions. Dakshina, the discriminative intellect is the energy of *dakṣa*, master of the works or unerring right discernment, but unerring in the ideality, in *mahas* or *vijñāna*, his and her own home, not unerring in the intellect, but only straining towards hidden truth and right out of the mental dualities of right and wrong, truth and falsehood. This deputy and messenger of the Ritam Brihat seated in *manas* as reason, discernment, intellect, can only attain its end and fulfil its mission when Agni, the divine Force, manifests in the Prana, and manas and uplifts her to the ideal plane of consciousness. Therefore in this new activity she is described as straining and extending herself upwards, *uttānām*, to follow and reach Agni where are his topmost planes, *ūrdhva*, in the ideal being. From there he leans down and feeds on her, *adhayat*, through the flames of the divine activity, *juhubhiḥ*, burning in the purified and upward aspiring activities of the intellectual mind. This essential relation of the divine force and the purified mind is brought out in a more general thought and figure in the first line of the succeeding rik.

Agnim acchā devayatām manāmsi cakṣūmṣīva sūrye sancaranti yad īm suvāté uṣasā virūpe ṣveto vāji jāyate agre ahnām. (4)

Iva in the Veda is not always a particle of similitude and comparison. Its essential meaning is truly, verily, so thus, and it is from this sense that it derives its conjunctive uses, sometimes meaning *and* or *also*, sometimes *as*, *like*. Its force here is to distinguish between the proper activity of Agni and Surya, of *manas*

and *cakṣu*, and to confine the latter to their proper sphere and thus by implication to confine the former also. When we are mortals content with our humanity, then we are confused in our functions; the *manas* or sense-mind attempts to do the work of the *mahas* or idea-mind, to effect original knowledge, to move in Surya, in the powerful concrete image of the Veda. The ideal also confuses itself with sense and moves in the sense-forces, the *indriyas*, instead of occupying itself in all purity with its own function. Hence the confusions of our intellect and the stumblings of our mental activity in its grappling with the contacts of the outer world. But when we rise from our mortal nature to the nature of godhead, *devayantaḥ*, *amṛtam sapantaḥ*, then the first change is the passage from mortal impurity to immortal purity, and the very nature of purity is a clear brightness and rightness, in which all our members work perfectly in God and the gods, each doing its own function and preserving its right relation with its superior and inferior fellows. Therefore in those who are attaining this nature of godhead, *devayatām*, their sense-minds strain towards Agni, the divine force of Right Being and Right Action, *satyam ṛtam*,—they tend thát is to say to have the right state, *bhāva* or temperament, out of which the right action of the *indriyas* spontaneously proceeds; the seeings of the Yogin who attains, move in Surya, the god of the ideal powers, all that he perceives, creates, distinguishes, is worked out by the pure ideal mentality which then uses its four powers of self-revelation, self-inspiration, self-intuition, self-discernment, without suffering obscuration by the clouds of vital desire and impulse or deflection by the sense-impacts and sense-reactions. The sensational mind confines itself then to its proper work of receiving passively the impacts of the vital and material and mental outer world and the illuminations of Surya and of pouring out on the world in its reaction to the impacts, not its own hasty and distorted responses, but the pure force and action of Agni which works in the world, pure, right and unerring and seizes on it to possess and enjoy it for God in the human being. This is the goal towards which

Dakshina is striving in her upward self-extension which ends by her taking her place as *viveka* or right discernment in the kingdom of Surya, and this she begins already in her new activity by discerning the proper action of the mind from the proper action of idea in the mind. The purified intellect liberates itself from the obscurations of desire, the slavery to vital impulse, and the false reports and false values of the matter-besieged sense-powers.

The essential nature of Agni's manifestation which is at the root of this successful distinction, is then indicated. Night and Dawn are the two unlike mothers who jointly give birth to Agni, Night, the *avyakta*, unmanifest state of knowledge and being, the power of Avidya, Dawn, the *vyakta*, manifest state of knowledge and being, the power of Vidya. They are the two dawns, the two agencies which prepare the manifestation of God in us, Night fostering Agni in secret on the activities of Avidya, the activities of unillumined mind, life and body by which the god in us grows out of matter towards spirit, out of earth upto heaven, Dawn manifesting him again, more and more, until he is ready here for his continuous, pure and perfect activity. When this point of our journey towards perfection is reached, he is born, *śveto vāji*, in the van of the days. We have here one of those great Vedic figures with a double sense in which the Rishis at once revealed and concealed their high knowledge, revealed it to the Aryan mind, concealed it from the un-Aryan. Agni is the white horse which appears galloping in front of the days,—the same image is used with a similar Vedantic sense in the opening of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad; but the horse here is not, as in the Upanishad, *aśva*, the horse of vital and material being in the state of life-force, but *vāji*, the horse of Being generally, Being manifestated in substance whether of mind, life, body or idea or the three higher streams proper to our spiritual being. Agni therefore manifests as the fullness, the infinity, the *bṛhat* of all this sevenfold substantial being that is the world we are, but white, the colour of illumined purity. He manifests therefore at this stage primarily as that mighty wideness, purity

and illumination of our being which is the true basis of the complete and unassailable *siddhi* in the yoga, the only basis on which right knowledge, right thinking, right living, right enjoyment can be firmly, vastly and perpetually seated. He appears therefore in the van of the days, the great increasing states of illuminated force and being,—for that is the image of *Ahan*, —which are the eternal future of the mortal when he has attained immortality.

In the next rik the idea is taken up, repeated and amplified to its final issues in that movement of solemn but never otiose repetition which is a feature of Vedic style.

Janiṣṭha hi jeṟyo agre ahnām hito hiteṣu aruṣo vaneṣu
dame dame sapta ratnā dadhāno agnir hotā niṣasādā yajīyān. 5

This divine force is born victorious by its very purity and infinity over all the hostile forces that prevent, obstruct, limit or strive to destroy our accomplished freedoms, powers, illuminations, and widenesses; by his victory he ushers in the wide days of the *siddha* , for which these nights and dawns of our human life are the preparatory movements. He is effective and helpful in the effective powers that work out for our good the movements of this lower life towards immortal strength and power, he is active and joyous, *aruṣo*, in those that take the delight of these movements and to prepare us for the immortal bliss and ecstasy of the divine nature. Manifesting progressively that Ananda he the force of God establishes and maintains in each house of our habitation, in each of our five bodies, in each of our seven levels of conscious existence, the seven essential forms of Ananda, the bliss of body, the bliss of life, the bliss of mind, the senses, the bliss of ideal illumination, the bliss of pure divine universal ecstasy, the bliss of cosmic Force, the bliss of cosmic being. For although we tend upwards immediately to the pure Idea, yet not that but Ananda is the goal of our journey; the manifestation in our lower members of the divine bliss re-

posing on the divine force and being is the law of our perfection. Agni, whether he raises us to live in pure mind or yet beyond to the high plateaus of the pure ideal existence, *bṛhatā adhi sanūnā vartamānam*, establishes and supports as the divine force that divine bliss in its seven forms in whatever houses of our being, whatever worlds of our consciousness, have been already possessed by our waking existence, life, body and mind, or life, body, mind and idea, *dame dame dadhānaḥ*. Thus manifesting god's bliss in us he takes his seat in those houses, domiciled, *damūnaḥ*, as we have it in other Suktas, and in those worlds, to perform as the *hotā* in his greater might for the sacrifice, greater than the might of other gods or greater than he has hitherto possessed, the offering of human life into the immortal being, *ā daivyam janam, yajathāya devān.*

In a culminating rik which at once completes the first half of the Sukta and introduces a new movement, the Rishi once more takes up the closing thought of this verse and carries it out into a fuller conclusion.

Agnir hotā ni asīdad yajīyān upasthe mātuḥ surabhā u loke
yuvā kaviḥ puruniṣṭha ṛtāvā dhartā kṛṣṭīnām uta madhya iddhaḥ.(6)

Agni thus takes his seat in us and because it is through human activity that he is to fulfil the sacrifice, because the ascending movement is not completed, he takes it in the lap of his mother in that rapturous middle world. For the middle world, the Bhuvah, including all those states of existence in which the mind and the life are interblended as the double medium through which the Purusha acts and connects Heaven and Earth, is the proper centre of all human action. Mind blended with the vital energies is our seat even here in the material world. The Bhuvah or middle regions are worlds of rapture and ecstasy because life-energy and the joy of life fulfil themselves there free from the restrictions of the material world in which it is an exile or invader seeking to dominate and use the rebellious earthly material for its purposes.

Agni sits in the lap of the mother, on the principle of body in the material human being, occupying there the vitalised mind consciousness which is man's present centre of activity and bringing into it the mightier bliss of the rapturous middle world to support and enlarge even the vital and physical activities and enjoyments of our earthly existence. He sits there in the human sacrifice, full of eternal youth and vigour, *yuvā*, in possession of the ideal truth and knowledge, in possession of the unerring rightness of the liberated pure ideal life and consciousness, *kavi ṛtāvā*, and releasing that truth and right in many purposes and activities, *puruniṣṭhaḥ*, for He works all these results as the upholder of men in their actions and efforts and labours, *dhartā kṛṣṭīnām*,—he is that in all his forms of force from the mere physical heat in earth and in our bodies to the divine Tapas in us and without us by which God affects and supports the existence of the cosmos; and because he is thus supremely the upholder of human life and activity, therefore he is kindled in the mid-space; the seat is on the fullness of the realised mind-consciousness in the microcosm, in the rapturous mid-world of fulfilled life-energy in the macrocosm. There kindled, awakened and manifested in man, *samidhā buddhaḥ*, *samiddhaḥ*, he does his work for upward-climbing humanity. Thus by the return in *iddhaḥ* to the words and the idea with which he started, the rishi marks the close of the first movement of thought.

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO LITERATURE (III)

The Yoga and its Objects

THERE are yogas and yogas. Each yoga has its own means : some base themselves on the physical organism, some on the life-dynamism, some on the emotional, others on the mental faculties, and yet others seek to combine in their method one means with another. But all of them, broadly speaking, have one aim viz. to heighten the state of ones being above and beyond the normal bounds of the body and life and attain a release into a freedom of self-existence or non-existence—*mukti*. The yoga of which Sri Aurobindo speaks here, however, is of a different kind. It is distinctive in its aim and distinctive also in its means. The object of this Yoga is not liberation, *mukti*, but fulfilment, *sampatti*. Fulfilment of what ? of the Will of God in Creation. And what is that Will ?

The Divine has projected the universe out of his own Being with a purpose. That purpose is to manifest Himself, his inalienable nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, *saccidānanda*. It is the aim of our Yoga to work out this Supreme Will by the liberation of human life from the holds of Ignorance, Limitation and Death and its transformation in the divine nature of Knowledge, Infinity and Immortality. The whole of man,—not the mind alone, or the soul alone,—is to be taken up and subjected to the transformiing change. All the faculties of the being are to to be yoked to this One Purpose. This is the means, and this the goal of our Yoga which is indeed a Purna Yoga, the Integral Path, as it includes all of man and consequently all of life in its comprehensive scope. To be sure, such a grand objective as this is beyond human means to reach. It is only the World-Power which has initiated the Movement that can lead it to its victorious culmination.

In the context of this aim of our Yoga, liberation of the indi-

vidual soul, personal *mukti*, ceases to be the sole object. It is indeed indispensable, but only as a necessary and inevitable step. For without the central transcendence of the triple rule of lower nature governed by Ignorance, no divine change is possible.

II

The first truth the sadhaka of this Yoga has to perceive is that all is the Divine, the One Brahman. He permeates all orders of existence. He is there in every creature, in every point of Space and in every moment of Time, supporting all as the *sad ātman*, an impersonal Self. All are Names and Forms on the bosom of this Self.

This realisation of an impersonal divine Existence deepens further into a second realisation in which one sees the Divine not only supporting and containing but also embodying itself in all things. Not only are all things in the Self, but the Self too is in all of them. It is That which makes the Names and Forms live and real.

And there is a third, the crowning realisation to follow : above all there is a fact of an infinite Divine Personality, the Supreme Purusha, who transcends both the world of Names and Forms and the Impersonal Atman supporting them. It is He who has put out this universe from the infinitude of his Being and who presides over it in the Lila of His manifestation. The whole world-existence changes its hue. It is no more a battlefield of contraries; it is realised to be a variegated self-extension of the Divine Being in His waves of Light, Beauty and Bliss which strike under certain conditions as their very opposites. From Him radiate all these multiplicities in Creation and it is in Him also that we find our oneness with others. He is the Lord in whose sovereign sway the sadhaka has to be awaken and grow. It is to this Supreme Person that you have to deliver yourself for the completion of your life's mission.

If you would have the Master assume the reins of your being

in his celestial hands you must surrender yourself to Him absolutely. Absolutely : neither in the mind, nor in the heart nor even in the body shall there be any reservation. All is to be given in a sacred offering. True, complete surrender is not possible in a day. Still one can begin with a whole-hearted *saṁkalpa*, an attitude, a will to surrender imposed on the entire being. No egoistic demand, however faint, no personal preference however masked, shall be allowed to taint the purity of this consecration. All dualities must be renounced and all existence embraced as an expression of the One Divine. If you thus give up yourself wholly in His hands the way is clear for the working of His Lila through you and in you.

When this is done there is no need of a formal discipline, *kriyā*. For it is the Divine who takes up and effectuates the Yoga. And besides, the utmost that man could do by his own effort is nothing compared to what is possible for His mighty Shakti.

Once the initial surrender to the Lord is made, the next step is to stand aside and observe the working of His Shakti. The complex movements of its process, now taking up a few ends here, now changing over to other threads there, unsettling the established rounds of nature,—all these and many more appear to land one in the very heart of chaos and bewilder the anticipating human mind. A quiet strong faith in the intelligence and the ultimate effectivity of the Higher Power at work is required of the sadhaka. Whatever is done within or without, it is the work of the Shakti offered to the Lord as a *yajña* of which the sadhaka is only the *yajamāna*. As the *yajamāna*, he holds the *ādhāra*, sees the sacrifice progress and tastes the fruit given to him. Not involved in the movement as a doer, he perceives the true nature and the extent of his *ādhāra*. He awakens too to the yet concealed regions of his being where the divine part of himself dwells—regions where abound masses of knowledge and the seas of ananda—and he learns to let their revelation glide into an overt participation in his life-progression.

III

The sadhana of Purna Yoga has many lines of movement. But the most effective start is made by offering to the Divine the fruit of your actions. To give up the fruit of action means you do not perform actions for the particular fruits you expect of them; you do what comes to you ordained by the Master, *kartavyam karma*, regardless of the results. Whatever the results, they are given by God and you receive them with trust in his Wisdom.

Next, you surrender not only the fruit but the actions themselves to the Lord. You realise that you are not the doer. You perceive that it is really Prakriti, the executive Power of the Divine that is doing all action at the command of the Lord. It is He who determines the action through your *svabhāva* and it is the Prakriti who executes it. Once you realise this truth in the depths of your being, neither action nor the results of action can bind you. Sri Aurobindo speaks of three stages of the growth of this knowledge :

first, when you surrender the initiative to the Master of your being and act as He directs;

second, when you believe that in the heart of all beings there is God moving them by his Maya of three Gunas and are able to perceive that you are really not the worker at all but it is the machinery of the three Gunas that does all works. By steady dissociation from the Gunas you stand above them in your central poise, the Purusha, and in time the Prakriti too will be free from their mechanical hold;

this is the third stage in which the very Gunas of which the Prakriti is constituted undergo a transforming change. Sattva will pass into Jyoti, pure illumination, Tamas into Shanti, infinite Calm and Rajas into Tapas, a divine Force. Whatever action proceeds from such a foundation of a new harmony will be, indeed, an undeflected expression of the will of the Purusha one with the Will of God. A vast and mighty Force will be found moving and acting in you, possessing your mind, your heart, your very body, and you yourself will be one centre of the divine Dynamism.

It is indispensable for this liberation that you should be totally free from desire, *spṛhā*, which creates longing and attachment to things; from duality, *dvandva*, which forges on the being the clamps of attraction and repulsion, love and hate; from egoism, *ahaṅkāra*, which creates a false identification with things resulting in one's bondage to them. All these take their characteristic expression in the workings of the three Gunas of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva,—the most dangerous being the deceptive formulations of the Sattva Guna,—and are the enemies of self-surrender.

These processes are worked out by the Divine Shakti in its own rhythm with its own pace and stress varying with each individual need. All that is demanded of you is a continual remembrance, a constant assent to the workings of the Yoga Shakti with an unshakable faith and a vigilant perseverance. For the path is long, the Goal is high. It is nothing less than the acceleration of centuries of evolution into a few years of Yoga, the transformation of your entire human nature into a divine nature. Yet it is not your own puny will and effort but the infinite Shakti of the Almighty that is charged with the task and whatever the time taken, whatever the failings in the instrumental nature, its fulfilment is inevitable. The reliance here is on God and God does not fail even though man in his fumbling steps may do.

These then are the four aids for the *siddhi* of this yoga :

Śāstra, the teaching of *sarvam khalu idam brahma*, All is Brahman, and *ātma samarpaṇa*, total self-surrender to the Lord of all;

Utsāha, zeal in pursuing the path with constant assent and remembrance;

Guru, the Teacher who is God Himself or the person who embodies Him for the purpose to the disciple;

Kāla, Time, the duration of which is ultimately decided in the all-knowing Wisdom of the Master of all Yoga.

M. P. PANDIT

THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

XI

EDUCATION

IV

LET us take a bird's eye view of the evolution of modern education before we proceed to a discussion of the various researches and experiments in education, conducted with unflagging zeal, in Europe and America.

It has been rightly said that the history of education in Europe is the story of the conflict between the advocates of Plato's views and those of Aristotle. Fundamentally, the two philosophers did not very much differ, but the little difference that there was, was of so vital an importance as to mark them off as champions of two distinct attitudes towards life. Plato points to the Real, the Eternal, the Incorruptible, and holds up the wise, calm, selfless philosopher as the ideal of education. "Philosophers are the lovers of the vision of Truth", "longing after the whole of things both divine and human", and "moving spontaneously in the world of being."[1] The philosophers alone, by virtue of their spiritual and moral qualities, are the natural guardians of the State, and "cities will never cease from ill until they are governed by philosophers."[2] Contrary to current notions, the philosophers of Plato's conception were expected to be no aloof, withdrawn figures, living in the ivory towers of their abstract thought, but dynamic personalities, leading the masses, the Demos, towards light, truth, beauty and the Good. Those who think that the dualism between the

[1] & [2] Plato's Republic

eternal, archetypal Forms and the passing appearances of the world, in Plato's doctrine, crippled his philosophy for active participation in the welfare of mankind, have taken only a partial and superficial view of Plato's thought—they have missed its comprehensive unity. It is true that some isolated passages lend colour to the contention that Plato laid an exclusive stress on the contemplation of the Forms or Ideas, and had nothing but contempt for the body in which the soul is imprisoned. But the vast unity of his thought embraced "things both divine and human", and he even speaks of the descent of the man of wisdom to the level of the ordinary man for leading him to the True and the Good.

"Then, I said, the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all—they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.

What do you mean ?

I mean that they remain in the upper world : *but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labours and honours, whether they are worth having or not.*

But is not this unjust ? he said; ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better ?

You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who *did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State,* and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of one another; to this end he created them not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State."[1]

[1] Plato's Republic

The above passages make it perfectly clear that Plato's ideal in education was to raise man from his animal nature to his spiritual nature. Those who charge him with exclusive aristocratic leanings fail to perceive that it was to the radiant, harmonious aristocracy of the soul, to the serene, sun-bathed heights of culture and refinement that he beckoned the Demos, the populace; he did not call the elite to the flesh-pots of special powers and privileges. His ideal had a great ennobling and sublimating force, which the later generations hardly ever recognised, and, in their eagerness for material and momentary success, almost completely missed.

In Phaedo Plato makes Socrates say that though, as a young man, he had "an amazing passion for the branch of knowledge known as natural science", he felt that in his preoccupation with scientific studies, he ran the risk of "losing the eye of my soul." The naked eyes, the physical senses, he realised, could not give him the truth of anything whatever. He declared that other means must be discovered which could give "the truth of what is."

We find in Plato's scheme of education a definite insistence on the knowledge of the soul, the knowledge of the eternal Forms, and on the harmony between the soul and the body, which results from that knowledge, and which alone can ensure perpetual inner happiness, and smooth and amicable relations with the outer world. By knowledge he means the knowledge of Reality, and not of the phenomena[1]—of what is, and not of what appears to be. One who knows what is, knows how to rate what appears to be, at its proper worth. One who knows the Being, can know the truth and significance of the Becoming.

Unfortunately, the depth and range of Plato's thought were beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries ; and the generations that followed failed to compass them either. His aristocracy was the exalted democracy of the selfless and illumined men, the democracy of the twice-born, the dwijas, as we would say in India. His influence exerted a powerful upward pull. He

[1] The knowledge of the phenomena, he calls "*opinion*", not knowledge.

could never have conceived of the bread-and-butter brand of democracy in which genius and talent are made to forswear their greatness, and the exceptional individuals who might have been pioneers of a higher culture and a nobler way of life, are forced to be yoke-fellows of the plebian and the proletarian. The equality tnat Plato preached was equality on the heights of human consciousness, the equality of the children of God, of the children of light and truth. But the equality that Marx and Lenin preached is the regimented economic equality on the lowlands and backwoods of human consciousness, the false and precarious equality of the dwellers of the dark caves. Spengler and Toynbee are right when they equate democracy with cultural decay and degeneracy. To raise the Demos was Platos' ideal, not to entrench it in its squalid earthiness.

Aristotle did not possess Plato's mystic vision of the transcendental Forms, and of the true and the Good, but accepted some of his views with certain amendments as abstract postulates and presuppositions of his philosophy. His active interest lay in the empirical and analytical method, and the stress of his genius fell naturally on the scientific and practical, the material and concrete aspects of life and truth. Ridiculing his master's theory of Forms or Ideas, he says : "But to call them patterns, or to speak of the other things as sharing in them, is to talk in empty words and poetic metaphors." Aristotle's stricture typifies the dogmatic positivism of the analytical reason to which spiritual reality is a sealed book. But in this distinctive bent of his genius, he had the collaboration of the Time-Spirit. The truth of Matter had to be affirmed in its own right, even if it were to be at the cost of spiritual faith ; for, indeed, without Matter, Reality would have no base to stand upon and manifest in the material world. But in stressing the scientific side, Aristotle gave his views a somewhat excessive tilt towards empiricism ; and so, instead of striking the right balance between Spirit and Matter, or Forms and phenomena, he swerved from the essential unity of Plato's doctrine, and sowed the first seeds of the later

lop-sided development of science, materialism and democracy. In consequence, philosophy relaxed its hold on Reality, and began to occupy itself more and more with phenomena and appearances. The eye of the philosopher's soul began to close, and his senses became more active and alert. Though Plato's influence, as Whitehead asserts, continues through the centuries, it is only in a diluted and whittled form that it does so. It is Aristotle who must be credited with having given the decisive direction to later philosophy, and prepared the way for the advance of the empirical sciences. His influence came down, filtering through mediaeval Christianity, to Renaescence and Reformation, and culminated in the Industrial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century and its modern universal sequel.

Bacon (1561-1626) widened the gulf between Spirit and Matter, and gave the Aristotelian tilt a definite curve. Though his professed ideal in education was, as it was Aristotle's, "straightly to conjoin contemplation and action", the growing materialistic trend of the times made him advocate the application of knowledge "for the benefit and use of life." Not knowledge for its own sake, which was the ideal of Plato, but knowledge "for the use of life". This pragmatic pursuit of knowledge is, of course, theoretically unimpeachable—for, life must be raised and illuminated by the knowledge that is attained—but in actual practice what always happens is that knowledge, thus pursued tendentiously, pragmatically, with the ulterior object of benefitting life, tends to lose the freedom of its disinterested flight—it finds its wings weighted with the demands of life. What could have benefited life from its heights of light, remains bound to life, serving its petty and passing ends.

John Comenius, a Czech, who regarded himself as a disciple of Bacon, followed in the footsteps of his master, and exerted considerable influence upon the English system of education. As a devout Christian, he, too, like Bacon, wanted a close union between contemplation and action, but the actual result of his teaching was that science came to occupy the central place in

the curriculums of the universities, and classical literature had to content itself with a very minor place in it.

Torn up from its spiritual roots, education drifted with precipitate rapidity towards empirical observation, analysis of the observed data, and the construction of hypothetical theories from those data; and the knowledge that was obtained by this outer process was taken as the only reliable knowledge human mind could hope to acquire.

Descartes (1596-1650) brought the weight of his genius to bear upon the scientific and rational method. He encouraged the advancement of scientific knowledge, so that men could become "masters and possessors of nature." Influenced by the Christian ideals in general, and by St. Augustine in particular, he laid considerable emphasis upon the active, humanitarian life, and the furtherance of material interests. He imparted a fresh impetus to the spirit of scientific progress, and, in Peguy's words, "wielded his thought as if it were action." His influence on education tended to accelerate the drift towards rationalism and scientific realism.

Locke (1632-1714) and Hume (1711-1776), following Hobbes (1588-1679), underscored the empirical and practical methods in the study of nature, and encouraged the scientific approach in education. Locke denied the existence of innate ideas and moral principles, and Hume built his whole philosophy on sense-impressions, which, according to him, graduate as ideas, and considered all notions of the supernatural as "sick men's dreams."

Rousseau (1712-1778) revolutionised not only the society and politics of his time, but literature and education. His contribution to the theory of education was, indeed, enormous. He advocated with the passion of a prophet a loving return of man to Nature.[1] He preached a romantic naturalism, and detested the artificial ways of civilised life. He counselled a simple and sincere following of nature, inner and outer, which alone, he believed, make for harmony and happiness in life.

[1] By Nature he meant mainly the inner nature, in which the distinctive qualities of one's being inhere.

"Life", he says in his famous book, Emile, "is not breath, but action, the use of our senses, our faculties, every part of ourselves which makes us conscious of our being. Life consists less in length of days than in the keen sense of living.

Our wisdom is slavish prejudice, our customs consist in control, constraint, compulsion. Civilised man is born and dies a slave. The infant is bound up in swaddling clothes, the corpse is nailed down in his coffin. All his life long man is imprisoned by our institutions.

Fix your eyes on nature, follow the path traced by her. She keeps children at work, she hardens them by all kinds of difficulties, she soon teaches them the meaning of pain and grief. Accustom them therefore to the hardships they will have to face."

..."I hate books; they only teach us to talk about things we know nothing about."

"When I want to train a natural man, I do not want to make him a savage and to send him back to the woods, but that living in the whirl of social life it is enough that he should not let himself be carried away by the passions and prejudices of men; let him see with his eyes and feel with his heart, let him own no sway but that of reason."

"The neglect of all religion soon leads to the neglect of man's duty."

Rousseau's influence can be clearly traced in almost all modern pedagogic theories; and many modern educational institutions, particularly the Pestalozzi Children's Village, of which I shall speak later, and the Kindergarten schools, owe their basal principles of child education to the ideas propounded by Rousseau. In fact, he gave education a new orientation, and tried to rescue it from the ruts of an arid, hide-bound, scholastic intellectuality. He stressed development, rather than instruction—the natural development of healthy instincts, harmonious emotions, and spontaneous reason. His contribution to the education of the

senses is a landmark in the history of child pedagogy. He was not only the herald of liberty, equality and fraternity in the field of politics (he was one of the originators of the French Revolution), but in education also. Kant was so much impressed by reading Rousseau's Emile that he said : "There was a time when I proudly imagined that knowledge constituted the honour of humanity, and I looked down upon the ignorant people. It was Rousseau who unsealed my eyes. This illusory superiority vanished : I learned to honour man."

Diderot and the Encyclopaedists envisaged a cultural education of the pansophic type, based on enlightened reason and the freedom of the intellect. Unlike Rousseau, they believed in civilisation, and in the great value of intellectual instruction. The watch-word of their educational policy was "democracy, humanism, science, enlightenment, and freedom."

However powerful the influence of Rousseau on education, the analytical, empirical, utilitarian bias of the modern mind, enamoured of scientific materialism, proved too strong to be dislodged by such stray assaults of a deeper and more synthetic ideal. The drift continued, gathering momentum as it advanced. The central problems of philosophy—Reality, Man and Nature—were steadily tucked away in the lumber room of forgotten inrerests, and the mind of man went hungering after the discovery and possession of the outer world, the world of shifting phenomena. Of course, there have been sporadic attempts, made from time to time, to rehabilitate the eternal values, as enunciated by the Greek philosophers and Christianity, but the counter-acting force of the realistic and scientific trends has always carried the day.

It is, then, no wonder that education, following in the wake of and receiving the cue from the general philosophy, has gone far afield in the direction of science and technology, and cut itself away from its ancient anchorage in the eternal values. The result is a bankruptcy of true knowledge, and a darkening of human nature. What modern education gives us as knowledge

is but a tissue of hypotheses and, more or less, intelligent conjectures. For, the temporal and phenomenal can never be known except in its right relation to the Real and Eternal. Liberal education, which was once the pride of Europe, is today but a shrunken ghost of its former self, science and technology having sucked its life-blood and left it pale and panting.

But it is a matter for gratification that, since the closing part of the nineteenth century, there seems to have begun a slow, hesitant and hampered reawakening to the higher ideals of education and the eternal values of life. A universal discontent with the hollow results of education, and the increasing dry-rot and disorder in society, seems to have induced a serious reconsideration of the educational problem. Not that any definite departure has been universally acknowledged, or any satisfying synthesis worked out in practice; but an earnest research has been under way, and extensive experiments are being carried on. But what really impedes the working out of a synthetic formula or an integrated scheme, is the want of an integral philosophy of life, a philosophy of what man is in his being, in his essence and reality, and what he has to become in the world. No philosophy that fails to embrace both being and becoming in a wide sweep, can give the right lead to modern education. It must take its stand on the creative union of Spirit and Matter.

The greatest impetus that education had ever received till then came after the first world war. The educational problem assumed an acuteness and urgency unknown before. It was realised with disconcerting clearness that, unless the youth of the nations were weaned from perverting systems of education, and educated on the right lines, the future of the world was, indeed, bleak and dismal. In the nineteen-twenties, many educational institutions had been organised on an international basis. In Europe and America, many avenues of improvement were explored by the educationists, so that the schools and universities might turn out better students, endowed with the harmonious qualities of enlightened manhood, and trained to think in terms of freedom,

equality and universal justice. But it was the first world war that gave an unprecedented fillip to educational overhauling. New, creative ideas were born under the urgent pressure of unmanageable circumstances and the hovering menace of destructive forces, political and scientific. There was a remarkable stirring in the educational atmosphere. But again it was the powerful magnetism of science and technology that stood in the way of any radical reform and balanced reconstruction. Some of the new ideas were whistled down the wind, and others were tailored to the preponderant material needs of the hour. Education was made to play into the hands of political and commercial vested interests. But still, side by side, one could perceive a flutter and ferment of creative ideas, an earnest groping after integrative formulas, a more psychological attempt to base education on the deeper truths of life. The second world war gave a ruder shock, and proved to the hilt that science, deflected from its path of integrity and disinterested seeking for knowledge, cannot but end in dehumanising man, and not only mechanising, but brutalising his social and cultural life. It has also proved the truth of Plato's theory that "unless political power and philosophy meet together, there can be no rest from troubles."

Writing on the pernicious futility of mere scientific and technological education, Sir Richard Livingstone, who was once Vice-Chancellor of the Oxford University, says : "Education has many tasks—training the intelligence, widening the mind and enlarging its interests, teaching the techniques on which modern civilisation is based. But it may do all this and never reach our central problem. What raises man above the savage ? His inventions, his science, the work of his engineers and chemists ? We have only to consider recent history to see that these things do not necessarily civilise men, and may be consistent with a lower level of humanity than that of any savage tribe. If economics, science, technology and organisation were all that were needed, there was nothing wrong with Germany. It is not our material civilisation that is defective; it is ourselves. The real issue is

whether men are to be ruled by power, pleasure, or the latest bright toy which they have created, or by goodness, beauty and reason."[1]

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Indian spirituality and idealistic thought have been flowing in a steady stream into the Western hemisphere, and helping to turn the discontent of the disillusioned materialists into an eager quest of Reality. Its result may not yet be too apparent, but if the utterances of the elite of the West are any indication of the changing spirit of the times, those of Emerson and Thoreau and Whitman, of Edward Carpenter, A.E., and Yeats, of Maeterlinck and Romain Rolland, of Gerard Heard, Aldous Huxley, and Isharwood, of Toynbee and Sorokin—not to mention the celebrated Western Orientalists—herald some sort of a spiritual awakening. Already there are faint signs of it, and, in course of time, as it grows, it is bound to introduce a new spirit and ideal, a spiritual aim and method into modern education. Once the Western mind awakes to a perception of the significance and goal of human life, education will no longer be suffered to be prostituted by the material interest of the family and the society, or the political and economic exigencies of the nation. Undeflected by any extraneous influence, it will proceed to realise its aim of "helping the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best, and make it perfect for a noble use."[2]

A spiritual awakening in the elite of the West is, therefore, the first desideratum. Not a return to the goody-goody, traditional pietism of the past, to the outworn creeds of a musty theology or to the punctilious observance of religious cults, which have lost their animating spirit and vital force through a freezing of the religious faith and a palsy of the moral fibre, but an opening of the inner eye to the luminous essence and reality of life, to the mystery and marvel of Nature, to the Infinite and Eternal that sustains and guides the finite and the fugitive, to the supreme

[1] "Some Tasks for Education" by Sir Richard Livingstone
[2] Sri Aurobindo

Truth that seeks its progressive manifestation in the multiplying diversity of the universe—this is the only way out of the present juncture. An intelligent quest of the Reality, which is hidden behind the appearances, must be undertaken as the sole and supreme objective of human life. And it must be a quest undertaken in the true rational and scientific spirit, which Einstein expresses, when he says : (The scientist's) religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection." Reality must be sought with the same passionate intensity with which science runs after the shadowy[1] forms of Matter. The true science is the science of Spirit, of Reality, of Truth, of the indestructible, universal Spinozan Substance, by knowing which, as the Upanishad says, all is known.

The spiritual awakening of the elite must be followed by a general awakening of the Western mind to the supraphysical realities of existence, and the divine Law of Love, which presides over the Law of Nature. Reality is an indivisible, manifold unity, which can be seized, not by the analytical reason, but by the integral vision of intuition. The superscience of tomorrow must occupy itself with this ever-living, ever-creative Unity. Its approach to Reality will be an essentially spiritual approach, as the famous historian, Toynbee, prophesies :

"The time has come for us, in our turn, to wrench ourselves out of the seventeenth century mathematico-physical line of approach which we are still following, and to make a fresh start from the spiritual side. This is now, once again, the more promising approach of the two, if we are right in expecting that, in the atomic age, which opened in A.D. 1945, the spiritual field of activity, not the physical one, is going to be the domain of freedom."

[1] "The external world has thus become a world of shadows."—Sir A. S. Eddington.

If the new spiritual age dawns again—for, these dawns, like the physical dawns, invariably emerge out of the thickest darkness of the night of the world—a spiritual philosophy will spring spontaneously from the illumined consciousness of man.[1] This philosophy will not be the product of intellectual thought and speculation, but a natural transcript, in terms of human intellect, of man's experiences on the higher and deeper planes of consciousness, of what he will see and feel in the infinitudes of Spirit.

An immediate result of having a spiritual philosophy of life will be the formulation of a spiritual philosophy of education, which will aim straight at the ultimate destiny of man—an integrated personality, liberated from the ego, divinely transformed in his nature, possessed at once of the universal and transcendent consciousness, feeling his oneness with the whole world, *atmānam sarvabhūteṣu sarvabhutāni cātmani*, and living and acting in it

> "Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
> To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
> And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
> Casting down light on the inconscient darkness."[2]

(To be continued)

RISHABHCHAND

[1] As did the Vedas and the Upanishads
[2] *Jivanmukta* (Poem by Sri Aurobindo)

ŚRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI* *

ŚRI Aurobindo's speculations about the future of man and his world—speculations grounded largely on his own mystic experiences and Yogic realisations—led him to the conclusion that 'mind' will one day be, is perhaps being already though slowly, superseded by 'supermind' and that this supramental consciousness will in good time facilitate the creation here on earth the home of a divinised humanity. But if man changed, with him must change also his social and political institutions, his arts, his poetry. In his illuminating treatise, *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has tried to indicate the possible extended frontiers of the poetry of the supramental age. Poetry at its purest best has been described by Abbe Bremond as "a mystic incantation allied to prayer"; the Vedic or Upanishadic mantra, for example, had this peculiar potency, and often strikes us, half as a prayer from below, half as a whisper from above. If, then, poetry is quintessentially soul speaking to soul, it should leap over meddling middle terms like the analytical interpretative intellect and the sensory reflex reactions and succeed in communicating directly with the soul. Before the mechanism of the nerves or the senses starts translating the poet's images or before the intellect supervenes to dissociate the images, anatomise the sentences, or exercise itself in semantics, the poetic utterance must have achieved instantaneous communication, as a tune strikes the ear, as light embraces the object. Once the soul itself has been stirred to new life, the effects no doubt will be felt by the other instruments also and such poetry must suffuse the whole man with a new glow. For the creation of poetry with this elemental irresistible force, the poet needs an intensity of vision and sustained inspiration at the

* Lecture delivered in the University of Leeds on 23 February 1959.

highest possible level. The real poetic word is no short-hand substitute for thought, it is in itself a spark of creative life,—indeed the (poetic) Word is Brahman. When it falls, the soul seizes it as hospitable soil receives the seed, and the results can be incommensurable. When the mantra sinks in the receptive ear, says Sri Aurobindo,

> Its message enters stirring the blind brain
> And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
> The hearer understands a form of words
> And, musing on the index thought it holds,
> He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
> But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth :
> Then, falling silent in himself to know
> He meets the deeper listening of his soul :
> The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains :
> Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
> Are seized unalterably and he endures
> An ecstasy and an immortal change;
> He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
> All knowledge rushes on him like a sea :
> Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
> He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
> Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech.

Apart from the mere sound, the seeming 'sense', there is in poetry, and more especially in the kind of poetry that we are discussing, "the embodied truth", the creative seed; and this can be met only by "the deeper listening" of the soul.

Some of Sri Aurobindo's own shorter lyrics—notably *Rose of God*, *Thought the Paraclete* and *The Bird of Fire*—may perhaps be cited as a foretaste of this future poetry. But how about the future epic ? Aren't the days of the great epic gone for ever ? We often think that the answer is in the affirmative, because we carry in our minds too narrow an image of the *Ramayana*, the

Iliad, or the *Song of Roland*. But antiquity and anonymity mustn't alone be the deciding factor. To quote from *The Future Poetry* :

> "The epic is only the narrative presentation on its largest canvas and, at its highest elevation, greatness and amplitude of spirit and speech and movement. It is sometimes asserted that the epic is solely proper to primitive ages when the freshness of life made a story of large and simple action of supreme interest to the youthful mind of humanity, the literary epic an artificial prolongation by an intellectual age, and a genuine epic poetry no longer possible now or in the future. This is to mistake form and circumstance for the central reality. The epic, a great poetic story of man or world or the gods, need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action : the divinely appointed creation of Rome, the struggle of the principles of good and evil as presented in the great Indian poems, the pageant of the centuries or the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us are as fit themes as primitive war and adventure for the imagination of the epic creator. The epics of the soul most inwardly seen as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the future. His indeed may be the song of greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the universe".

The *Aeneid*, the *Divina Commedia* and *Paradise Lost* are epics as incontestably as are the *Iliad*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Song of Roland*; and neither can we deny recognition to an epic like Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, notwithstanding its unconventionality, nor even 'prose epics' like Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Proust's almost endless novel. Likewise, we have no right to rule out the

epics of the soul where the action is not physical but spiritual, where the battle is fought, not on an earthly terrain, but the high plateaus of the soul. There is 'static' drama in Maeterlinck's plays, in the *Book of Job*, in the epic of Harischandra's silent suffering for upholding Truth. Even Dante's and Milton's epics have ultimately to be interpreted in terms of psychic or psychological states or actions rather than in crudely physical terms.

As often with Sri Aurobindo, having thus posited this new possibility in epic creation, he presently set out to realise it : he would himself see how far his speculations were capable of immediate realisation. He must have begun *Savitri* in the Baroda period and cast it for the role of companion to *Urvasie*. But it was not completed,—at any rate it was not published. He took it up again in the twenties, after he had already published in the *Arya* the series of articles that have since assumed shape as *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Future poetry*. The revision, however, proceeded very slowly. There were, again, revision after revision, parts undergoing ten or more revisions, "each trying to lift the general level higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry". In the thirties and forties, something like a final cast came to be made; "as it now stands", Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1936 to a correspondent, "there is a general Overmind influence, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to its highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence or vital towards them". Parts of the poem—a Canto here, Canto there—were published during the forties, and presently the whole poem, first in a two-volume edition, and, in 1954, in the one-volume definitive edition.

In the form in which we now have it, *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* is in three Parts, divided into 12 Books or 49 Cantos, making up a total of about 24,000 lines, being thus longer even than Browning's *The Ring and the Book* by some 3000 lines. Of the projected 51 Cantos, the last in Book VII (The Book of Yoga) is without a title and is presumably incomplete while the first

two in Book VIII (The Book of Death) are missing—they weren't or couldn't be written. Although the epic is thus apparently incomplete, when one reads it at one spell (and what a long spell !), one is rather struck by the rounded fulness of the poem; one, feels that nothing that could relevantly be said has been left unsaid. Almost fifty years a-growing, *Savitri* has been shaped and re-shaped in the fires of successive inspirations till it achieved at last an adequate splendour of revelation. As originally planned, *Savitri* was to have been a simple narrative poem in two Parts, the first with Earth for its scene of action and the second carrying the action "beyond" to the worlds of Night, Twilight, and Day, and concluding with the heroine calling down to this obscured and perverted world the purifying and transforming powers of Sachchidananda. In the final cast of the poem, the old *Mahabharata* story of Savitri and Satyavan has immeasurably gained in volume and purpose, and what is legendary is integrally fused with the symbolic and the material spirals into the realms of the Spirit, while the Spirit willingly suffers definition in terms of the material.

But why, it may be asked, the Savitri theme ? It is not possible for the average Western reader to gauge the large space the legend of Savitri fills in the Hindu's racial memory. With many episodes in the *Mahabharata* to choose from, both Toru Dutt and Romesh Chunder found the Savitri story irrresistible. Even today women in India, whether wife or maid, perform certain mystic rites on a particular night in the name of Savitri, and they taste the nectarean hope that their present or future wedded life will be filled with fruitfulness and felicity. Savitri is symbolic of the true wife's devotion and power—unflinching devotion and power even to overcome the greatest of evils, Death. And Satyavan is Truth. Beauty, love and power (the power of devotion and chastity) allied to Truth can dare anything, achieve anything. Since Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was a "world-transforming Yoga", since it assumed the possibility of mind being transformed into 'supermind', limited self-divided earth-nature being transcended by

'supernature' and earth-life by the life divine, he chose as the fit symbol hero and heroine of his epic of the evolving soul the immaculate Satyavan and Savitri, names already familiar to us, and charged with untold significance by association with the ancient Hindu scriptures and epics.

A rough analysis of the poem may now be attempted. Cantos I and II of Book I (The Book of Beginnings) plunge *in medias res* and open on "the day when Satyavan must die". Already "twelve passionate months" since the marriage of Savitri and Satyavan are over, and the fatal day has dawned. But it is also the "symbol dawn" of a new epoch in cosmic history. There is thus "double-time" in *Savitri* : although in the "legend", the poem comprises the events of a single day in temporal terms, in the "symbol" all time and all eternity are involved in the spiritual action. Like the "double-time", there is "double-action" also : on the material plane the poem begins on the day Satyavan is fated to die, and the poem ends with the resolution of the crisis, in other words the discomfiture of Yama the Lord of Death, and the return of Satyavan to life. On the spiritual plane, too, the poem plunges into the middle of things, the fateful hour in human history when the Asuric creation—shall we say, the Atomic Bomb ?—threatens the world and all the great achievements of the race with total annihilation. Having reached the present crucial moment in the adventure of evolution, is there to be an advance—or only a relapse, a retreat, a slipping into the yawning abyss of extinction ? Time was, time is—but how about time future ? How is the issue between threatening Death and the hope of New Life to be worked out in future time ? The issue is posed squarely in *The Life Divine* and a marvellous future Possibility is presented in the language of metaphysics. In *Savitri* the problem is posed again and the possibility presented again, but in terms of poetry. The great spiritual drama unfolded in *Savitri* is thus really played in the theatre of the human soul, for the Asuric power can be countered, mastered and transformed only by spiritual power; and so the poem ends with the defeat of a "partial and

temporary darkness of the Soul and Nature". It is the prerogative of the awakened soul, acquiring a clear sense of direction and power and poise of movement, to tunnel through death-daunted Life and Time to the bliss everlasting at the far end. Even as Satyavan with Savitri's help lives down the invasion of Night and Twilight and emerges into the clear light of Day, the human soul too (which is the spearhead of the evolutionary advance), led by the Supreme's gift of Grace, overcomes the limitations of the Ignorance and the obscurities and contradictions of mental life, and achieves the bliss of divine or superconscient life.

In the opening Cantos, even as Savitri's predicament on the "fatal day" is presented, her special status, her divine origins, too are stressed —

> To live with grief, to confront death on her road,—
> The mortal's lot became the immortal's share.
> Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
> Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
> Outcast from her inborn felicity,
> Accepting life's obscured terrestrial robe,
> Hiding herself even from those she loved,
> The godhead greater by a human fate.

The day has dawned as other days to all except Savitri; only she knows the struggle ahead, the battle that must be fought and won before the following dawn. Satyavan's impending death is but a link in an endless chain of thwarted purposings in this "too too sullied earth"—

> Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
> Guard the Wheel's circling immobility,
> A bond is put on the high climbing mind,
> A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
> Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.

And it is the burden of Savitri's destiny to "wrestle with the Shadow...and confront the riddle of man's birth and life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night". She is Savitri the anxious, agonised wife, bearing the weight of an intolerable and frightful eventuality; but she is also—and she knows it too—the great World-Mother. The human and the divine are locked in her in an intimate, ineffable embrace. Hence she faces the future with surface anxiety and also with a deep quietude and self-mastery. The readiness is all,—

> Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death
> Or hew the ways of Immortality,
> To win or lose the godlike game for man,
> Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.

How does it happen that a mere girl has become thus the vessel of the immortal Spirit ? The answer is elaborated in the three remaining Cantos of Book I, and the whole of Book II (The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds) and Book III (The Book of the Divine Mother). In the *Mahabharata* story, King Aswapathy, being childless, undergoes austerities till he is promised a daughter. But in the Aurobindonian version, Aswapathy is no mere childless King desiring increase, he is rather in Mr. A.B. Purani's words, "the aspiring human soul down the millenniums of evolution in his search for the truth of himself, of the world and of God". Aswapathy is really what Homo Sapiens is after all the countless ages of evolution, and what he hopes to be in the highest flights of his imaginative striving and in his noblest aspirations and speculations; and so Aswapathy's Yoga truly becomes "an epic climb of the human soul in its journey from the inconscient to the very gates of the Superconscient". Canto III begins succinctly : "A world's desire compelled her mortal birth"—Aswapathy being both himself and the world, and his trance of seeking having for its aim, not his own salvation alone, not that particularly, but rather the releasing of humanity and the world from the revolving

chariot wheel of frustration, and taking them to the far heights of the Life Divine. The description of Aswapathy's Yoga or trance of seeking takes up about 370 pages—almost one-half of the whole poem. Book II especially, spread over 15 Cantos, is the one major piece de resistance in *Savitri* and extends to nearly 250 pages. The main lines of the argument, however, are clear enough, and may be stated in Sri Aurobindo's own words—

> "Aswapathy's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness, and this is described in the Second Book : but this too is as yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother".

Starting as a mental being Aswapathy wings higher and higher till his soul achieves release from his earlier bonds and is in a condition to receive the Secret Knowledge :

> Thus came his soul's release from Ignorance,
> His mind and body's first spiritual change.
> A wide God-knowledge poured down from above,
> A new world-knowledge broadened from within.

Now the Secret Knowledge itself is described in Canto IV. It is a series of flashes, wide-reaching all-transfiguring illuminations, and as the Knowledge grows into him, the human mould breaks, he is clothed with new raiment, and acquires new eyes, new ears; he sees the cosmic drama of involution and evolution, the *lila* of God descending into clay and clay aspiring to godhead; and the mystery of world-existence is a mystery no more—

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space :
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he....
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme :
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he :
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.

Released from bondage and charged with this Secret Knowledge, the soul achieves a complete spiritual transformation. Ascent and descent meet in close embrace and a new luminous stability and strength is forged—

In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
His being towered into pathless heights,
Naked of its vesture of humanity.
As thus it arose, to meet him bare and pure
A strong Descent leaped down. A Might, a Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire,
Enveloped him...
An Omniscient knowing without sight or thought,
An indecipherable Omnipotence,
A mystic Form that could contain the worlds,
Yet make one human breast its passionate shrine,
Drew him out of his seeking loneliness
Into the magnitudes of God's embrace.

Having thus solved his personal problem as an individual, Aswapathy projects himself as King or representative man, and makes a new ascent as the pioneer Traveller of the Worlds, the leader and pathfinder of the race :

> He travelled in his mute and single strength
> Bearing the burden of the world's desire...
> World after world disclosed its guarded powers,
> Heaven after heaven its deep beatitudes,
> But still the invisible Magnet drew his soul.

The subconscient, the mental, the superconscient and all the intermediate worlds are traversed, and æons are gathered, summed up or anticipated during this extraordinary vigil of Aswapathy's Yoga. In the end Aswapathy finds himself flooded by a primordial energy—the Consciousness-Force of the Divine Mother :

> Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss,
> An atom of her illimitable self
> Mastered by the honey and lightning of her power,
> Tossed towards the shores of her ocean ecstasy,
> Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,
> He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
> A cry of adoration and desire...
> He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone.

Returning to consciousness, he faces the Divine Mother and makes a passionate appeal on behalf of the star-crossed race of man—

> "How shall I rest content with mortal days
> And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
> I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
> The glory and the beauty of thy face ?...
> A foiled immortal soul in perishing limbs,
> Baffled and beaten back we labour still;

Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive...
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart...
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate".

And the Divine Mother answers—

"O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power...
Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair
And in her body as on his homing tree
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings...
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will".

With Part II (Book IV), we come to the human story; the promise has been given to Aswapathy, and the fulfilment begins. We pass from the Canto describing the Birth and Childhood of the Flame, to the Cantos where we watch Savitri's immaculate progress from girlhood to the glorious dawn of womanhood and love. Her search is long, but at last her wandering feet lead her to the hermitage where young Satyavan is in attendance on his blind aged parents, King Dyumathsena and his Queen, now deprived of their throne. Savitri and Satyavan meet in sudden felicity and recognise the hand of fate.

Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,
The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn.
Profound in perfume and immersed in hue

They mixed their yearning's coloured signs and made
The bloom of their purity and passion one.
A sacrament of joy in treasuring palms
She brought, flower-symbol of her offered life...
Thus were they in each other lost awhile,
Then drawing back from their long ecstasy's trance
Came into a new self and a new world.

Returning to her father, Aswapathy, Savitri reports her joy. Her face is transfigured by happiness and Narad himself the Sage thrills with wonder and asks—

"Who is this that comes, the bride,
The flame-born, and round her illumined head
Pouring their lights her hymeneal pomps
Move flashing about her ? From what green glimmer of glades
Retreating into dewy silences
Or half-seen verge of waters moon-betrayed
Bringst thou this glory of enchanted eyes ?"

Savitri speaks about Satyavan, and Narad's face falls; pointedly questioned, he praises Satyavan's manifold perfection but adds that he is fated to die a year hence. Savitri, however, is undaunted :

"Once my heart chose and chooses not again...
Death's grip can break our bodies, not our souls;
If death take him, I too know how to die.
Let fate do with me what she will or can;
I am stronger than death and greater than my fate;
My love shall outlast the world, doom falls from me
Helpless against my immortality".

Her mother's sweet reasonableness also fails to affect Savitri's decision. If it be only for a year, she will still accept this joy; but it will not be for a mere twelve months, for she can dimly

see her real self and Satyavan's true self, and she knows that this threatening shadow can be met and chased away. It is now Narad's occupation, having raised the hideous doubt, to argue it away; he too sees wondrous possibilities being realised as the result of Savitri's adamantine will. So Narad assures Aswapathy and the Queen that all will be well, and they must hope and believe. Savitri is not as other women, she is cast for a uniquely difficult cosmic role of struggle and redemption—

> A day must come when she must stand unhelped
> On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
> Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
> Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
> To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
> Alone with death and close to extinction's edge,
> Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
> She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
> And reach an apex of world-destiny
> Where all is won or all is lost for man.

Book VII (The Book of Yoga) begins with a description of Satyavan and Savitri's wedded love. But the joy of the union is marred, so far as Savitri is concerned, by her foreknowledge of Satyavan's approaching death and the consequent ache in her heart. Savitri, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, is nevertheless a limited human being in appearance; her surface human reactions, however, do not really belie the veiled divinity in her heart. She is the golden fruit of Aswapathy's Yoga, and she herself becomes a Yogin, determined to know herself fully and realise her strength completely to be in readiness for the coming trial. She looks inward, tears off veil after veil of blinding appearance, rejects the pale or coloured reflections that claim to be the self, passes by the Mother of Sorrows, the Madonna of Might and the Mother of Light, turns away from both the emphatic Denial and the arrogant Affirmation, till at last her purposive divinity achieves

full efflorescence and she sees in a flash the whole arc of her terrestrial mission. If Aswapathy is Aspiration, Savitri is both the Response and the resulting Transformation—at once the individual transformation of an elected Person and the promise of total transformation of earth and earth-nature. As Mr. Purani puts it, "Aswapathy maintains throughout the position of the witness, Savitri carries out the Divine dynamis. Aswapathy sees the Vision of the Supreme, Savitri brings down the Fire". And both Aswapathy and Savitri, in their aspiration and transforming spiritual action, strive, not for themselves alone but for all, for a general liberation, a universal realisation and a splendorous new creation.

We return to the fatal day. Savitri's Yoga has armed her with vision and strength, and she accompanies Satyavan to the forest. When the preordained hour arrives, Satyavan cries out her name and falls as one dead :

> She knew that visible Death was standing there
> And Satyavan had passed from her embrace.

Part III (Books IX-XI) details the protracted struggle between Savitri and Yama for the soul of Satyavan. On the eve of his Great Illumination under the Bodhi Tree, Siddharta too fought Mara and his denizens; Jesus likewise resisted in the desert the subtle blandishments of Satan; and Job saved himself from his well-meaning worldly-wise friends. Savitri's is a similar ordeal, though, being the struggle of a woman and a wife with a power like Yama, it is more excruciatingly tense and vivid, and carries us to the supremest heights of Victory,—Victory over Death, and Love the Victor, and Truth the fruit of Victory.

Yama's phantom appearance is fearful as well as beautiful; death-giver though he is, still is he a god—

> Something stood there, unearthly, sombre, grand,
> A limitless denial of all being
> That wore the terror and wonder of a shape.

In its appalling eyes the tenebrous Form
Bore the deep pity of the destroying gods...
His shape was nothingness made real, his limbs
Were monuments of transience and beneath
Brows of unwearying calm large godlike lids
Silent beheld the writhing serpent, life.

In the ensuing trial of strength—a trial in which a variety of mind-forces and soul-forces are engaged—we have some of the features of the *Mahabharata* war. We are treated to a *Gita*, we are overwhelmed by a *Visvarupa* (a cosmic Vision), we are made to follow the vicissitudes of a Kurukshetra; we catch glimpses of Death's Other Kingdom, the Hedonist's Bower of Bliss, the paradisal splendours of Vaikuntha (Heaven), the ineffable Void of Nirvana. With Savitri we journey through the symbol-worlds of Eternal Night, Double Twilight and Everlasting Day. But the conclusion of the story—being the conclusion of a Legend and a Symbol, not of an action in historic time—is for us still a conclusion yet to be concluded. We are bewildered, even as Satyavan is bewildered, but we are also content to exclaim like Satyavan with a feeling of peace and a deep sense of fulfilment that Savitri is the cause of all, with her enchantments she has twined us round ! The fateful day has surpassed its fate, and concluded in the usual night—

Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater Dawn.

And that is the end of *Savitri*. What is so striking about this epic is its sheer sweep, its amazing modernity, its pervasive mystical quality and its singular poetic power. Sri Aurobindo has

imposed his empire on all knowledges and spiritual disciplines, and it is not surprising that we catch echoes—echoes that become new voices—or mark parallels—parallels that merge in the womb of Truth at infinity's distance. The three Parts of *Savitri* are respectively the Aurobindonian versions of the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Wide comprehension is the distinguishing mark of all epics, and in *Savitri* this comprehension is seen in its encyclopaedic grasp of the totality of human experience and knowledge, ranging from the intuitions of the Vedic Rishis to the scientific discoveries and inventions of our own day. The striking modernity of *Savitri* is thus a function of its acute awareness of the contemporary situation in the physical and biological sciences, in the fields of philosophy and psychology, and in the regions of the humane arts; but all is integrally related to the double-action and double-time of the poem so that, in the final accounting, *Savitri* is neither an overflow of tradition nor an eruption of 'modernism' but a recordation in poetic terms of the ends and means determining man's and the earth's ultimate destiny set in the background of cosmic time.

In a sense, *Savitri* is *The Life Divine* turned into poetry, even as the *Divine Comedy* is Catholic theology and the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas given a poetic body. Nevertheless it needs to be reiterated that *Savitri* and the *Divine Comedy* are significant poetry, not mere philosophy or theology dressed up in poetical fripperies. The background philosophy, like any informed commentary, may help the reader to wind his way towards the central meaning of the poem; yet to explain the philosophy or make philosophical notes or scan the lines is not to seize the whole meaning of the poem. Rather the reader has to train himself to respond to the dynamics of mystic poetry so that he may be able to leap from the symbol to the truth behind it, keep steady pace with the cataract of images, and feel the thrill of each spurt of revelation as it comes.

In 1932, Sri Aurobindo said that *Savitri* was "an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement,

so far as that is possible in English", even as in *Illion*, his other epic, he tried to catch the Homeric movement. The iambic blank verse of *Savitri* dispenses with the complicated structure of the Miltonic blank verse paragraph, and rather builds each line itself as a sparkling and almost self-sufficient unity, like a series of bricks piled one above the other to rear a gigantic building. Even so, as the *Poetry Review* remarked, in total impact Sri Aurobindo's blank verse is Miltonic. Even as the *anushtup* in Valmiki's hands proved a fit vehicle for the immortal strains of the *Ramayana*, so too this new-forged iambic line, each line by itself "in its own mass and force",—metallic in its finish and clarity and capable of wondrous delicate handling at the hands of a Master,—has served Sri Aurobindo's purpose admirably. It is too much to expect that an entire epic can be written at the white heat of poetic frenzy, but the Overhead inspiration is frequent enough—and for reasonably long spells—in such triumphant evidence that we are fully justified in hailing *Savitri* with its incandescent light of knowledge, its vast reserves of controlled energy and its superb rhythms of creative life as verily "a flame from the earth and yet the heavenly messenger of the Immortals". To conclude in the words of Professor Raymond Frank Piper—

> "We know that we must resort to the art of poetry for expressing, to the fullest possible artistic limits, the yearnings and battles of mankind for eternal life. And fortunately a tremendous new body of metaphysical and mystical poetry has already inaugurated the new Age of Illumination... During a period of nearly fifty years before his passing in 1950, he (Aurobindo) created what is probably the greatest epic in the English language and the longest poem in any language of the modern world. I venture the judgement that it is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful, and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of supramental spiritual

existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparallelled massiveness, magnificence, and metaphorical brilliance.

Savitri is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute".

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

CHAPTER XXII

REBIRTH AND OTHER WORLDS; KARMA, THE SOUL AND IMMORTALITY

WE see that rebirth of the soul in successive terrestrial bodies is an inevitable consequence of the soul's manifestation in earth-nature. There remain now three considerations : the process of rebirth; secondly, if each rebirth is immediate or after intervals of other-worldly experience; and thirdly, the process of the spiritual evolution itself, and the changes which the soul undergoes in its passage from birth to birth.

If the physical universe were the sole world, rebirth would be merely transmigration from one body to another. The soul could have no freedom from Matter. But since there is life on other planes after death and before rebirth, we conclude that other planes co-exist with ours, and also act on and communicate with this physical plane. Man can become conscious of these planes, even in life, and so extend his power of self-transference.

There are two causes for this interegnum between birth and birth : one is an attraction of the other planes for the mental and vital being in man's composite nature, and the other is the need of an interval for assimilation of the completed life-experience and a preparation for a new embodiment. But these become effective when the mental and vital individuality has been sufficiently developed. While the soul is yet unripe for higher world-existence there may be almost constant transmigration. Later the passage to other planes may be the law. A third stage may be, when the soul is more powerfully developed, when no interval is necessary and immediate rebirth can be resumed.

In popular belief there is one idea that death is followed by the assumption of another body; and there is another idea that

sojourn in another plane, heaven or hell, is necessary. In this latter the return to earth only intervenes when merit and demerit of the last physical existence are exhausted, and the being is ready for a new earthly life. But these two ideas are compatible if we admit a variable movement dependent on the stage of evolution of the soul. This implies a spiritual evolution.

A necessity for life on other worlds arises from the fact that different world-principles are interwoven and interdependent. Repeated rebirth in human form is necessary in the earthly existence so that progressively higher grades may enter the earth-life. In the rudimentary stage of humanity immediate transmigration might be necessary as long as the psychic individuality is insufficiently developed. There is then a downward attraction of the soul compelling its speedy resumption of physical life. The same persistent form of personality may re-incarnate; but the more normal life would be a new formation of the personality.

The developing soul-personality must get sufficient power over its own nature-formation to persist without support of the material body and overcome any detaining attachment to the physical plane. For it is the soul-person or psychic being that survives and carries the mind and life with it on its journey. In a subtle body it passes to the planes of mind and life, existing for a time on these higher levels. But by the necessity of evolution these past formations would be shed, and the psychic person would build a new formation.

Where would the temporary dwelling be for this new formation to take place ? It may not necessarily be on the mental plane, if his vital being is strong or his soul-personality developed. So long as the mentality is not sufficiently developed the soul may rest in the subtle physical planes appropriate to its earthly life; for the past mortal state corresponds to the development on earth. It is his relation with higher planes of existence that determines the place, period and character of his resting-place after death.

He may create through his belief and intense desire a past-

mortal environment attached to the other worlds in which he may linger. His imagination may thus become a creative force enabling the mental being to live amid its own images until they were dissolved by the soul's pressure. They are an enlargement of his terrestrial life.

But there are also the true vital worlds, original constructions, in which the soul may be held. It may rest first in a region of subtle-physical experience before passing to the life-worlds. Only if there has been sufficient mental development does the soul pass beyond to the mental and spiritual-mental planes. If he had developed as to overleap the mental level, it might not be possible for him to return so long as the physical evolution had not developed here an organisation of an overmental or supramental life.

Beyond the mental worlds there must be a final resort in the plane of pure psychic existence. The normally developed human being would pass successively through the subtle-physical, vital and mental planes on his way to the psychic habitation. At each stage he would get rid of the formed personality of the past life, casting off body sheath, life sheath and mind sheath, but the essence of his mental, vital and physical experiences would remain. The soul would then pass into a mind of psychic assimilative sleep.

All this, though justified by certain facts of subliminal experience, is not conclusive for the reasoning mind. We have to see a more essential necessity for these internatal periods. We find that our development takes place very largely by the hidden action of these higher planes on the earth-plane. It is this action that compels an emergence from the subconscient. The action of the higher forces takes place principally in us through the subliminal being where essential experiences are stored. By this hidden interim action a more rapid development takes place once man has passed beyond the lower stages of embodied mind.

A new birth does not merely repeat and continue our past surface personality. There is an assimilation and rearrangement

of old characters, and a new ordering of the past. Each birth is a new start, and rebirth is a progression. Past strong vibrations of personality can only be discarded after death on the proper planes to which they belong. Then can commence the positive integrating preparation by the soul—in the plane of psychic repose from which it would return to its terrestrial pilgrimage.

While the soul evolves successively on earth the physical, vital, mental and spiritual being, it can only do this because of the existence of the corresponding native element behind. For man has within him, latent and subliminal not only a physical being but a vital, mental, psychic, supramental and supreme spiritual being. Their powers have to be brought into his active consciousness. It is through these parts of his being that the shaping influence from above takes place. As our conscious evolution here develops, so do we attain the corresponding higher internatal resort.

We begin to see the significance of after-death sojourn in worlds beyond. In the ancient idea of reincarnation, the soul is on earth as a result of desire and ignorance. It has to return to earth so long as it has not wearied of desire. It follows the wheel of birth until it is enlightened and liberated. In the internatal worlds it exhausts its accumulated store of merit or demerit, due to sin or virtue, and then returns to earth, sometimes as animal, sometimes as human. The new incarnation is determined by the soul's past action, its Karma,—either good and fortunate, or bad and unhappy, or a mixed happiness and suffering. The Karmic Law is a strict accountant as well as a judge of all our deeds. There is a double punishment and reward; first in the afterworld, and later again in the new life on earth.

These popular notions cannot satisfy the search for the true significance of life. Escape from the world cannot be the final issue; nor can the world serve only as a school of sin and virtue. If the soul is a being from the Infinite, the significance of this life must be a growth out of assumed ignorance towards its own full spiritual stature. The idea of Karma is a construction of the

vital mind concerned with the petty rules of life, expanded into a law of the cosmos.

From a higher level of reason we see that all energies of Nature must have their natural consequence. Each being reaps the harvest of his works, in this birth or in a later one. Not only the individual, but others may benefit from his work. Man's being and nature are the result of his own inner and outer activities. This is the law of Karma, of Action. Man's past and present Karma determines his future birth. His past creates his present, and his present creates his future.

Two doubtful points in this scheme are : that good must bring good, and evil must bring evil results; and secondly that justice demands happiness from good deeds, and ill-fortune from evil. The law of Karma rests on the fact that it is mainly a man's actions that construct his fate.

This is a law which is entirely mechanical in character, and only satisfies if we regard cosmos as a Process without conscious Being or Will behind. But there is not only a law or process but also a cosmic Spirit, and a soul in Nature. It is our soul that determines its own evolution, and not the law of Karma. Law and Process are one side of our existence and their reign is over an outer mind, life and body. Only on the material plane is the Law rigid; as life and mind develop so the Process becomes more plastic and less mechanical; and the inner freedom of the soul begins to intervene.

The inner spirit cannot be a slave of its past actions. Whether past actions are formulated in the present life is with the consent of the psychic being. The soul seeks self-expression and experience. Its action is the development of nature so that it may grow out of the Ignorance; it is not the working out of a mechanical Law. Karma is an instrument; there is also a secret Consciousness and Will which is the user. In Indian astrology there is always provision for a change of even the most powerful bindings of Karma. But action is complex. Physical action is bound by the physical law; but it can be changed by the action of a higher law,

the life power and the mind power. The soul power can completely change our physical fate. A mechanical law of Karma is not the sole determinant.

There are many different kinds of energies—the inner and outer activities of the mind, life and body. All these cannot be categorised into a single duality of good and evil. Each form of energy has its appropriate consequence,—the seeking for truth must result in the growth into truth. Nature awards her prizes according to the energy and capacity put forward; so the swift, the brave and skilful are rewarded.

We cannot accept the simple solution that good luck is merely a return for virtue in a past life, or that suffering has necessarily resulted from sins of the past. This facile view only puts forward our superficial human feelings and standards as the cosmic Law. There must be a stronger foundation for the law of Karma.

The error arises from the fact that two values are selected out of the many created by Nature,—moral good and evil, and vital-physical good and evil—and it is supposed that one must be be the reward or punishment of the other. This only follows the law of our own vital-physical desire. But the truly ethical being does not need a system of rewards and punishments to follow the path of good and shun the path of evil. A system of rewards and punishments only debases the ethical values. It became a social necessity to restrain the harmful actions to the community and encourage what is helpful; but it is not a general law of cosmic Nature. The supreme Wisdom and supreme Good raises us towards itself by a spiritual power working through our inner being. The law of Karma (return to action and output of Energy) is not a simple, but a complex action.

Although the lines of action of energy are distinct, yet they act together and upon each other, not by any rigidly fixed law. Our own movements are mixed and our vital part demands rewards for actions done. This may create a corresponding cosmic action; invisible forces in Life-Nature may move according to the same plan. It may happen that a self-assertive egoism that acts

without restraint is itself acted upon in retaliation. This reaction may come in another life. But these are mostly actions on the vital or lower mental plane.

These reactions of Nature are not essentially rewards or punishments. They represent natural relations between the soul's experience and Nature's Force, just as fire burns when we touch it. But the reactions are variable. We are affected not only by our own life energies but by the energies of others and by universal Forces. All action is for the experience and growth of the individual being, not for reward or punishment. What we call fortune or misfortune are part of that experience; misfortune and suffering may be aids to spiritual progress. Rebirth centres around the soul's growth and need of experience. Although cosmic Law seems at first a great automatic movement of energy we see that it is a movement of consciousness. Within this movement is the cycle of rebirth by which the soul prepares itself for each successive step in the evolution.

The idea that the soul survives unchanged from one birth to another is too simple, and belongs to the physical mind's inability to look beyond this single existence. We cannot admit that though the body changes, the same mind and character and temperament are again reborn. If it were so there would be no spiritual meaning in rebirth. For growth, a new personality is indispensable.

The personality cannot achieve perfection by repeating the same character. This would be an eternal repetition, not an evolution. It is only our attachment to our present personality that demands such a repetition.

Personality is only the temporary mental, vital and physical formation which the psychic entity puts forward on the surface. It is not the abiding reality of self. In each birth a new personal formation is built up. The soul passing from the body keeps the same vital and mental form for a time; but these dissolve and only essential elements remain and are stored in the subliminal. Thus in each life new combinations come forward, the deposits of

many lives, producing always something new. The more these accumulated experiences can come into use, the richer is one's life. The gathering up of many personalities in one person may be a sign of a very advanced stage of the individual's evolution, when all these sides can be harmonised and integrated. All this taking up of the past would be for a new formation, and not a repetition of the past.

If life's intention is to teach the embodied spirit to be good and moral, then the memory of past births and actions would be necessary to recover, so that he may know why he is rewarded or punished, or received suffering. But such memory has little value for the evolving soul. Even though the soul itself remembers, it shows no signs of having profited by the teaching of the past experience.

Such memory might even be an obstacle to the building of a new personality. It would bind the reborn being to a useless repetition of the past, and stand in the way of his bringing forth new possibilities. Memory is important for purely mental learning, but for the soul assimilation and absorption of past energies are more important.

The absence of memory of past lives is often taken as disproof of rebirth. But it is obvious that loss of memory does not retard the growth of the being. So the soul's growth is not annulled by this absence of past memory. A new life and mind cannot keep all the impressions of the old life and mind. The subliminal being retains the stored impressions of the past, but this is cut off from the surface being. And thus a new personality can be built on the surface without conscious reference to what is within. There is the action from within, but the surface being is not conscious of this. In spite of this, fragmentary recollections of past births do sometimes occur. But only when the inner being begins to predominate does the memory of past personalities enter consciously into the shaping of the present life. Nature, however, is not concerned with the past, except as a source of materials, but with the shaping of the future.

What we ordinarily mean by immortality is the preservation of the superficial "I" which Nature only regards as a temporary form and not worth preserving. It is the secret Spirit in us which is imperishable and is represented in us by the psychic entity which is the true Person. The present "I" is but one step of many steps; we have to pass beyond to a higher degree of consciousness. Only the inner Person survives death, because it belongs to the eternity of our timeless spirit.

We demand a survival of our mind and life, and even body, but this could only succeed if these parts put on something of the immortality of the spirit. Our outer mental personality could only survive if it became powerfully individualised and one with the inner mind. A similar openness in the vital being could make its survival possible, in which the outer would represent the inner being. For this to be accomplished, the wall between the outer and the inner self has to be broken, so that the inner being governs the life. Our mind and life nature would then be a progressive expression of the soul, and they would persist without needing to be dissolved.

The being would still have to discard its physical form and put on a new body. The physical being could only endure if the causes of decay and disruption could be overcome, and at the same time the body become adaptable to the progress of the soul's growth. This triple immortality might be the crown of rebirth, and the conquest of the material Inconscience. But the true immortality would still be the eternity of the Spirit.

N. PEARSON

REVIEWS

I

The Cultural Heritage of India (Vol. I)—The Early Phases. Pub. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta 26. Pp. 652, Price Rs. 35.00

It was a happy idea of the Ramakrishna Mission to sponsor, as part of the Birth Centenary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in 1936, the publication of a comprehensive survey of Indian Civilisation and Culture in three volumes under the title *The Cultural Heritage of India.* Comprising weighty contributions from one hundred scholars on the various aspects of Indian cultural and spiritual tradition, the work was the first of its kind in its comprehensive scope, profundity of treatment and catholicity of outlook befitting the great occasion it sought to commemorate. It was hailed as a remarkable product of cooperative research and soon established itself as the nucleus of a future Encylopaedia Indica. It is now many years since the work got out of print and we are thankful to the publishers not only for bringing out a fresh edition but more for taking the occasion to enlarge the scope of the work, add fresh material and revise the old by bringing it up to date and rearrange the entire subject-matter in separate volumes so as to make each volume independent and complete in itself. The work as now projected, runs into five volumes, three of which have been published so far, the first being now before us for study.[1]

Time was when books on Indian history began their first chapter with the Vedic Period. It was taken for granted that Indian civilisation dated from its early beginnings in the primitive age of which the pastoral poetry of the Rig Veda is a faithful record. This smug position, however, has had to be given up in the face of mounting evidence—archaeological, historical, philological and other—that unmistakably points to a long, long prior

[1] The other volumes already released are Vol. III, Philosophies and Vol. IV, Religions

epoch of civilisation of which, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, the Rig Veda marks only the closing phase. Besides, the hymns of the Veda are now coming to be admitted to be much more than the crude incantations of Nature-worshippers that they were once taken to be; they are, on the other hand, a record of the spiritual and mystic past of a race who were highly advanced in the life of the soul. Who were the people that inhabited India during these prehistoric times ? Were they autochthonous or immigrant ? If immigrants, from where did they come ? What traditions did they bring with them and how did they influence or meet the ways and beliefs of the indigenous people ? What was the language that was spoken by the classes of that age ? Is Vedic Sanskrit the oldest language of the Indo-Aryans or is it pre-Homeric Greek that should claim the privilege ? These are the main questions that are dealt with in the first two sections of this volume viz. Background of Indian Culture and Prehistoric India.

The variety of climate and soil, the flora and fauna that abound in this country of continental dimensions—almost a miniature globe—the diversity of the races that came to inhabit the land down the ages and the interaction between their modes of living and thinking, the gradual evolution of a common Indian way of life out of this incessant ferment—with whatever elements that remained immiscible—are all covered in these learned dissertations. Also discussed is the complex subject whether India was the melting pot for the different races that poured down from Central Asia or whether India was the base from where waves of emigrations flowed northwards and peopled the countries of the Middle East, the Mediterranean and parts of Europe.

Next there is the question of the antiquity of Indian-Aryan Culture. The beginnings of this cultural movement are traced to sources outside India, e.g., Egypt, Mesopotamia, and other countries of the Near East and the possible influences of their civilisations on the Indian are examined. Were the civilisations of Sumer, Egypt and Asia Minor older than the Vedic or pre-Vedic ? It is difficult to give a definite answer in view of the conflicting

data that keep on coming up continually. Whatever it be, the Indian Culture, as the editors observe; "has an ideology which is of universal appeal and value." Their further remarks on the subject deserve attention :

> "In the history of Humanity as a whole, the first thousand years before Christ has been described as the Axial Period. During these thousand years, the nations of antiquity which flourished at that time, or rather their intellectual and spiritual leaders, gave expression to certain ideas, certain intuitions with regard to the nature of the Unseen Reality, and also with regard to our relations with it, which are still vital for Humanity, and round which also the mind of modern man in his gropings to grasp at the Unseen Reality is still revolving. It is the ideologies which developed in China, in India, in Iran, in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, and in Greece that furnish the axis for modern thought—the living religions of the world.
>
> Man, after he had become a civilised being and made life possible, and to some extent secure and comfortable, began to think seriously about the problems connected with life—particularly about the Great Guiding Force of Life and Being. It was arrived at by the deeper and the finer consciousness of Man when he had sufficiently advanced in civilisation; it was not merely the promptings of fear and wonder which lay at the root of primitive religion. Man made this great discovery for himself that behind life and existence there is a great Force, a great Presence, which has been viewed differently by different groups of men, conditioned as they were by their economic and cultural background. They discovered, as in India, the *ekam sat*—'the One Single Existence That Is'; and the Indian sages also said that the wise men, evidently in the different societies, described it in a manifold way.
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> It was to be the Axial Millennium with Humanity as

soon as they had arrived at a postulation of this great Unseen Reality behind Life, and mankind as a whole became convinced of it. This was conceived as a unique Force which had to be obeyed without question and which would not tolerate man's homage to be paid to any other lesser conception : that was the Hebrew attitude—the attitude of the Old Testament prophets.

Behind this monistic idea of the Jewish prophets was the conception of *Aten* as arrived at by the philosopher-king of Egypt, Akhen-Aten (Amen-hotep), who saw in that Force the Lord of Light and of Guidance as manifested in the material sphere by the Sun.

In China the conception of Tao or the 'Way' through which everything in this world is carried under an inevitable Law, was early arrived at, and it is the basis of all deeper religious thought in China, not only of Taoism, but also of Confucianism; and connected with the Tao concept is the great principle of Yang and Yin, i.e. of Light and Darkness, or the Positive and the Negative, or Heat and Cold, or Sky and Earth, or the Male and Female—Purusha and Prakriti, in Indian parlance.

In India, possibly based on certain conceptions which worked already in the minds of pre-Aryan peoples, the great concept of Brahman or the Supreme Spirit, a kind of Mana (as the Polynesians named it), which is both transcendent and immanent (*kat-v-ul*, as it has been called by the ancient Tamil sages of South India—'That which is beyond, and also within') in our mundane existence, was arrived at; and along with that went also the great concept of a Moral Order in the universe, which was analogous to the Chinese Tao, and came to be known to the Vedic people as *Ṛta* or the Supreme Truth, or as Dharma in later times, meaning 'that which holds things in itself, and represents their true nature."

The third section on Vedic Civilisation is devoted to the legacy of the Veda and the Upanishad. The ceremonial, social, cultural and spiritual aspects of the Vedic Religion and its subsequent development—in continuation of the tradition, not in revolt against it—into the philosophy and Sadhana of the Upanishads are dealt with by a number of scholars. Though the familiar stamp of the Western Indologist is descernible in certain lines of their approach, we do notice a marked tendency in these papers to leave the beaten track of the nineteenth century scholarship and evaluate the concepts and practices of the Veda and the Upanishads in the light of India's own tradition. The most notable of these writings is the paper on Vedic Exegesis by Srimat Anirvan. This masterly survey of the history of the Vedic Interpretation from the age of the Brahmanas to the present day is perhaps the best contribution in this volume faithfully reflecting the genius of the Indian spirit. He brings out, in his fascinating account, the role played by each of the several schools of interpretation in the preservation of the Vedic heritage and at the same time points to their shortcomings. He places his unerring finger on the lacunae in Vedic studies after the disrepute into which ritualist interpretation has fallen and the collapse of the modern 'scientific and rationalist' method of the western scholars caused by the fatal misapplication of the Theory of Evolution. He says :

> "The problem of Vedic exegesis then is the problem of reviving the spirit and recreating the inner experience of the atmosphere in which the mantras took shape. Mere intellectual ingenuity and superficial judgement will not help us, because here we are dealing with things of the spirit where an interpretation can hope to be true only when understanding has come through spiritual communion and insight... Like the mystic Asvattha tree with 'its root above and the branches below', the Vedic tradition, in a broad sense, stands at the very source of almost all forms of Indian spiritual cults. And the interpretation of this tradition can be attempted

> with best results if we do not place the Vedas on the isolated heights of the past, but with a total vision of the present retrace our steps to the roots discovering, with a penetrating insight, the links at every step. But this movement in breadth must be supplemented by a movement in depth. One has to discover the master-idea that has been behind this historical development. And here, it is the Spirit that must question the Spirit in that stillness of 'the ocean where the womb of the Word lies sunk in the depths of the Waters."

The writer welcomes, in this context, the approach of Sri Aurobindo which, he writes, 'has brought to bear on the subject the principles of a spiritual depth-psychology,' and 'will always be regarded as opening a new chapter in Indian Vedic interpretation.'

It would have been extremely relevant and helpful to the reader if this were followed up by a paper on the central features of the Psychological Method of Interpretation adopted by Sri Aurobindo in unveiling the Secret of the Veda and also the support he has derived for his findings from the very utterances of the Rishis of the Veda.

The fourth and the last section treats the next phase in the development of the Indian Religious Tradition, the rise and growth of the so-called heterodox systems of Jainism and Buddhism. Though they disclaim the sanction of Vedic authority, it is pointed out that their essential character derives from the spirit of the Veda and the Vedanta. In their condemnation of excessive ritualism and animal sacrifice, they are in the good company of some of the Upanishads.

Jainism, unlike Buddhist, is still a living religion in India. Its literature, unlike the Buddhist, is not confined to religion and philosophy alone. Jaina writers have written largely and competently on logic, grammar, poetry and poetics, lexicography, etc. 'They have a monastic system without a monastery'. They have elaborate rules for the conduct of their monks and they are followed to the letter even today 2,500 years after they were

laid down ! The cardinal doctrines of the Jaina philosophy are (1) *Syadvada* (or *saptabhangi-vada*), *may be* or *may not be* doctrine which rules out dogmatism in any sphere. Everything can be looked at from seven standpoints and each account is different from the other. In effect it means all statements are relative and none absolute. (2) *Nava-tattva*, nine eternal substances : jiva, ajiva, punya, papa, asrava, samvara, bandha, nirjara and moksha.[1] The Jiva is eternal and eternal its possibility of progress. This religion establishes a sympathetic link not only between man and man but also with all living beings in creation.

Buddhism is here described as a religion which struck 'a course midway between the rigorism of the Jains and the secularism of the sacrificial Brahmanas'. It opened the gates of the Highest Truth to all men of whatever class not only in India but carried the Message to countries beyond its frontiers. "The cultural heritage of India was shared by most of the Asians through the grace of this religion." And along with Religion the 'Buddhist art and architecture, language and literature, and above all, translations of the Buddhist scriptures and the subsidiary literature in all the languages of the countries where the religion made its home."

The original Doctrine of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path for their realisation with its psychological and ethical implications for the individual and the society, its continuation in more or less the same form in the southern countries like Ceylon, Siam, Burma etc. (Hinayana) and its transformation elsewhere in the North as the Mahayana and the introduction of a pronounced strain of esotericism after the 8th century A. D. as the Tantrayana or Vajrayana with sharp results in the end, are all well described in these papers. The state-support enjoyed by Buddhism in the heyday of its career and its decline as an institutional religion following changes in the faith of the Rulers are underlined. Attention is drawn to the gradual deterioration in the morale of the monasteries which were the main stay of this

[1] Conscious soul, unconscious non-soul, merit and demerit, flow into jiva, cessation of flow into jiva, bondage, destruction of the effect of karma, and liberation.

propagating Movement and also the paucity of men of real spiritual and intellectual eminence in the later times—a factor which told against the continued growth of Buddhism.

All told, this sumptuous volume should be welcome to all, to the scholar, to the layman, to the devout as well as to the free thinker. The vast amount of documented material that is laid out in these pages assures its utility as a book of reference for all serious students of Indian Culture and the spirit of tolerance that breathes throughout the book makes it a most pleasant and fruitful reading to the general public.

M. P. PANDIT

II

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya Memorial Volume edited by *Sri S K. Maitra, Sri G.R.Malkani, Sri T.R.V. Murti* and *Sri Kalidas Bhattacharya*. Publishers: The Indian Institute of philosophy, Amalaner, 1958, Price Rs.10.

Professor Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya (1875-1949) was one of the outstanding thinkers in the field of philosophy of the last century. He was an acute and austere intellectual and tried to construct a system of thought out of the assimilated elements of both Indian and Western Philosophy. Bhattacharaya's writings are extremely few, his style is compact and his thoughts too abstruse and abstract to be understood by the ordinary reader without repeated attempts. His treatises on 'Studies in Vendantism' Sankhya and yoga, and on 'The concept of Philosophy' are some of his best products in which he breaks out new lines of thinking.

The volume under review is a memorial to the late professor Bhattacharya by contributions from the pens of his pupils and eminent professors both from India and abroad. The editors are to be congratulated in bringing out this memorial volume in which there is a short biographical sketch of the professor and a short outline of his works given at the end. Professor Bhattacharya's 'Concept of Philosophy' finds an able exposition in the

hands of professor Rasvihari Das in his, "Logic, Metaphysic, Religion." According to Bhattacharya logical differences in the field of philosophy are due to metaphysical differences and metaphysical differences are accountable by religious differences. Professor Bhattacharya suggests that without religion there can be no metaphysics and without metaphysics there can be no logic. In other words every system of logic implies a corresponding system of metaphysics and religion. In the words of Professor Bhattacharya, "Logic presents a system of speech-created forms of meaning. There may be alternative systems, for logic presupposes metaphysic which presents alternative theories. The fundamental disputes in logic are unavowed metaphysical disputes...." The fundamental differences within logical theory are, as has been suggested, implicitly metaphysical, those in metaphysic are implicitly spiritual and those in the theory of the secular are implicitly religious." This is one of the most thought-provoking statements of professor Bhattacharya with regard to the origin of differences in the domain of philosophy and deserves due consideration especially by the positivists who distrust metaphysics. Some of the other notable essays of the book which deserve careful reading are, Prof. S.K. Maitra's 'A new approach to Bradley's philosophy', Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya's 'Objective attitude and Idealism', Prof. J.N. Mohanty's 'The Principle of Modern Kant Interpretation', and Prof. Murtie's 'The two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita', and the 'Unity of Man and Nature in East and West' by Prof. Howard L. Parsons, of the Iowa University.

The appendix II giving a brief account of the writings of Bhattacharya is most appropriate and we hope that the editors and admirers of the late professor would lose no time in bringing out all his works so as to enable the younger generation to be acquainted with the thoughts of this great mind. We, however, warmly commend the volume to all intellectuals of the country and in particular to students of philosophy.

K. C. PATI